

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 BONN 11540 081740Z

64

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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R 081730Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0286

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BONN 11540

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP, SW, GW

SUBJECT: NEW GERMAN AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE

REF: GENEVA 5174

1. THE AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE TO FRANCE, DR. OTTO-AXEL HERBST, WHO JOINED THE WEST GERMAN FOREIGN SERVICE IN 1951, HAS IN RECENT YEARS SPECIALIZED IN TRADE AND ECONOMIC POLICY. FROM 1960-68, FOR EXAMPLE, HE SERVED WITH THE EC COMMISSION, AND AT THE CONCLUSION OF HIS TOUR IN BRUSSELS WAS EC DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS. IN 1968 HE RETURNED TO BONN TO TAKE CHARGE OF THE TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY DEPARTMENT IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. SINCE 1973 HE HAS SERVED AS FRG PERMREP IN GENEVA.

2. BORN ON OCTOBER 9, 1918 IN MUELHEIM-RUHR THE SON OF A DIRECTOR OF ONE OF GERMANY'S MAJOR STEEL PRODUCERS, HERBST ENTERED GERMAN MILITARY SERVICE IN 1937 AND SERVED AS AN AIR FORCE OFFICER FROM 1939 TO 1945. IN THE POST-WAR PERIOD, HE STUDIED LAW AT THE UNIVERSITIES OF MUENSTER, BERLIN, AND COLOGNE. AFTER EARNING HIS PH.D., HE WORKED AS A LAWYER FOR THE GERMAN STEEL TRADE ASSOCIATION FROM 1949 UNTIL 1951, WHEN HE ENTERED THE FOREIGN SERVICE.

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PAGE 02 BONN 11540 081740Z

3. AFTER SERVING FOR A YEAR IN THE FOREIGN OFFICE HE WAS ASSIGNED TO WASHINGTON (1953-57). FOLLOWING HIS WASHINGTON TOUR HE WAS ASSIGNED AS AMERICAN AND CANADIAN DESK OFFICER IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. HE SERVED IN THAT POSITION UNTIL 1960, WHEN HE WAS TRANSFERRED TO BRUSSELS.

4. EMBASSY OFFICERS WHO DEALT FREQUENTLY WITH HERBST IN THE PAST FOUND HIM CONGENIAL IF SOMETIMES SOMEWHAT OVERLY SMOOTH. HE SPEAKS EXCELLENT ENGLISH AND FRENCH. MRS. HERBST IS ALSO FROM MUELHEIM-RUHR. ONE HIGH-RANKING FOREIGN MINISTRY COLLEAGUE SAID THAT HERBST HAD AN EXCELLENT IN-HOUSE REPUTATION AND HAD BEEN OFFERED A STATE SECRETARY POSITION IN THE PAST BUT HAD TURNED IT DOWN FOR PERSONAL REASONS.

5. WE UNDERSTAND THAT HERBST WAS FOREIGN MINISTER GENSCHER'S SECOND CHOICE AFTER STATE SECRETARY GEHLHOFF, WHO HAS BEEN ILL. GEHLHOFF, HOWEVER, DECLINED THE ASSIGNMENT AND GENSCHER THEN OFFERED IT TO HERBST. GENSCHER'S POLITICAL ADVISOR HAS TOLD US THAT HERBST IS "CLOSE" TO THE FDP.  
HILLENBRAND

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